

NATIONAL HEDGELAYING SOCIETY



[www.hedgelaying.org.uk](http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk)

PATRON HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

Preserving the Past    Protecting the Future

## Accreditation Scheme

**Bronze** (Competent)

**Silver** (Proficient)

**Gold** (Advanced)

This Booklet describes the Training and Assessment  
process and Accreditation Standards.



## Introduction

**The National Hedgelaying Society is offering a new nationally recognised accreditation scheme which will help to demonstrate the skill level and capability of individual hedgers who hold one of the accreditation levels. Accreditation is based on the achievement of Training and Assessment standards registered with Lantra Awards.**

### **Background**

The demand for accrediting the craft of hedge laying is increasing. A traditionally laid and sensitively managed hedge allows farming and conservation interests to meet; for the farmer a natural barrier to confine and shelter stock is erected, whilst for the conservationist, a wildlife habitat is created. Government commitment to hedgerow protection was included in the 1990 Environment White Paper, and appropriate legislation is included in the Environment Bill. Hedgerow protection, and encouragement for new hedge planting and management through Environmental and Countryside Stewardship Schemes has led to an increased call for hedge laying and traditional craft skills. The demand for hedge laying craft is no longer confined to agriculture; private estates, parks and other public areas, nature reserves, schools and gardens are increasingly employing this traditional skill.

The National Hedgelaying Society is registered with Lantra and offers training and assessment in hedgerow management. A series of progressive practical Assessments which lead to Three - tier accreditation awards in hedgelaying. The scheme is designed to ensure that hedgelayers achieve the highest standards of craftsmanship.

Accreditation assessments are available at the following Levels:

**Bronze:** Competent Standard

**Silver:** Proficient Standard

**Gold:** Advanced Standard

## Who can be Assessed?

Assessments are available to everyone, whether or not a member of the National Hedgelaying Society.

If you are new to Hedgelaying or on training schemes you should start with the Introduction to Hedgelaying Training Course and the accompanying basic skills assessment. Please see the separate leaflet about Introduction to Hedgelaying Courses. The Introduction to Hedgelaying course does not form part of the accreditation scheme but once completed, you can work towards the Bronze assessment with further training and practice.

If you are already working in the craft or have appropriate experience you can apply to take the Bronze, Silver or Gold Assessments which would give you Accreditation at the appropriate level. Assessments will be carried out as part of organized assessment days.

## Training

Where there is sufficient demand, training will be made available for all levels of assessment. Please make any training requests to the National Hedgelaying Society Secretary who can advise on training and assessment dates taking place at locations throughout the country. Candidates are advised to undertake some training and a practice Assessment before the actual Assessment day.

## How to Apply

Application Forms are available from the NHLS Secretary or can be downloaded from the website. Applications should be completed well in advance of the Assessment dates and submitted to NHLS with the fee, at least six weeks prior to the Assessment date. The fees include registration and examination costs plus the certificates if successful.

## On the day of assessment

A suitable venue for the Assessments will be chosen and assessor(s) appointed to carry out the assessments. The assessment will evaluate the quality of craftsmanship achieved in the chosen style and mark it according to the criteria shown on the Assessment Sheet. (below). Each individual will lay the required length of hedge on their own with their own tools.

## Safety code of practice

- any tools, equipment and facilities to be used during a training course and assessment must comply with safety regulations and be safe to use
- only safe working practices are to be demonstrated
- a Site-Specific Risk Assessment is carried out prior to the start of the Assessment

Award	Standard to achieve.
Bronze Competent Standard	Candidates will be required to lay 8 metres of stock proof hedge to a recognised style within 5 hours, with hand tools and if a chainsaw is used they must have an up to date chainsaw certificate.
Silver Proficient Standard	Candidates will be required to lay 8 metres of stock proof hedge to proficient standard in a recognised style within 5 hours, with hand tools and if a chainsaw is used, they must have an up to date chainsaw certificate. They must also demonstrate the ability to root lay, side lay and back lay and be able to explain the management of hedgerows including knowledge of hedgerow plants. All work will be assessed on the day of assessment.

<p>Gold</p> <p>Advanced Standard</p>	<p>Candidates will be required to lay 10 metres of mature stock proof hedge to an advanced standard in a recognised style within 5 hours, with hand tools and if a chainsaw is used, they must have an up-to-date chainsaw certificate.</p> <p>They should also demonstrate the correct method for start and finish and show back lay, side lay and root lay techniques. should be able to communicate the different styles and have good knowledge of the technical aspects of Hedgelaying. The hedge used for assessment must be a mature hedge not a maiden hedge.</p>
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Please note in any standard: if any section is marked below the minimum mark required, this constitutes an overall failure for the whole Assessment, even if the total marks achieved exceed the minimum mark required for the Assessment.

The National Hedgelaying Society has produced Factsheets on each of the main Hedgelaying styles and a Technical Guide to Hedgelaying which gives guidance on the basic techniques for Hedgelaying. These guides and other information are available via the NHLS Website at:

[www.hedgelaying.org.uk](http://www.hedgelaying.org.uk)

## GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT – What the assessors are looking for:

### 1. Pleach

- a) Starting the cut at the correct height for the size of the stem.
- b) Not cutting in sharply and then splitting stem downwards in a long tongue.
- c) Thinning the pleach down in an even manner with no kicking back into an open mouth
- d) Smooth finish to the cut with no 'hacking'

### 2. Heel

- a) All heels taken off
- b) Heel taken off low to the ground
- c) The cut sloping away from the pleacher (varies from style to style as to which angle the heel cut shall face.)
- d) Smoothness of cut with no damage to the Bark below.

### 3. Stakes Crooks and Binders

#### Stakes

- a) Stakes chosen suitable for the style and of correct quality.
- b) Stakes sharpened at the thick end and placed thick end in the ground (unless necessary to put thin end in)
- c) Stakes in a uniform pattern, at the correct angle and trimmed to the correct height above the binders
- d) Stakes forming as straight a line as possible within the hedge as dictated by the style. Correctly and evenly spaced.

#### Binders

- a) Started at the correct end and woven in the correct manner for the style.
- b) Finished height level and correct.
- c) Binders inserted behind each stake correctly and not protruding.
- d) Not cracked or damaged during the trimming of the stakes.

### 4. Appearance (true to style – see separate factsheets on each style)

- a) The finished height and width of hedge generally even and true to style.
- b) Bindings, if used, running generally level with correct placement within the stakes.
- c) Stakes or Crooks placed well, at correct angle, firm and holding the hedge well.
- d) Styles with a Back of hedge: Even brash along the back of the hedge showing few holes. Adequate 'flying brush' for appropriate styles.  
Styles where hedge is same on both sides: Even finish with both sides matching and built to a high standard.
- e) Overall appearance, balanced, neat and well built

### 5. Either

#### A. Tools (Bronze & Silver)

Sharp edge with no cracks or chips

##### I. Narrow shoulder

II. Tools sharp and appropriate for the job in hand.

III. If Chainsaw used must be in good working condition, All PPE must be worn.

Or

B. Start & Finish – appropriate to Gold Standard only.

### 6. Questions and Answers

Be able to explain the basic principles of hedgelaying, reasons for the style and how to maintain the hedge once it has been laid.

7. Health and safety

- a) Work area safe and clear of brash
- b) Correct PPE
- c) Awareness of possible risks
- d) Good hand eye co-ordination and safe working practices.
- e) Demonstrate good working practice.

8. Root lay/ Back lay / Side Lay – appropriate at Silver and Gold standard only.

## **Bronze Standard**

Candidates will be required to lay 8 metres of stock proof hedge to a recognised style within a single 5 hour period on one day. Hand tools and chainsaw can be used BUT if a chainsaw is used candidates must have an up to date chainsaw certificate and appropriate ID.

**A candidate must obtain the minimum mark equivalent to 50% in each section and an overall total of at least 50% of the total marks in order to gain certification.**

**All 8 metres of hedge must be completed within 5 hours.**

	BRONZE STANDARD	points	Min	
1	Pleach	20	10	
2	Heel	20	10	
3	Stake /crooks/ Binders	20	10	
4	Appearance (True to style)	30	15	
5	Tool Use and care	10	5	
6	Questions and answers	10	5	
7	Health and safety	20	10	
8	Total points possible	130	65	

## Silver Standard

The candidate must achieve 60% in all categories

And must lay 8 metres of Hedge in 5 hours.

In addition to basic Hedgelaying techniques the candidate must demonstrate good start and finish techniques in addition to root lay, side lay and back lay.

	SILVER STANDARD	points	Min	
1	Pleach	20	12	
2	Heel	20	12	
3	Stake /crooks/ Binders	20	12	
4	Appearance (True to style)	30	18	
5	Start and Finish	20	12	
6	Questions and answers	10	6	
7	Health and safety	20	12	
8	Root lay, back lay, side lay	20	12	
	Total points possible	160	96	60% = 96



## Gold Standard

The candidate must achieve 75% in all categories And must lay 10 metres of Mature Hedge within 5 hours. (It cannot be done on a maiden hedge.)

**Also,** To be able communicate the different styles and have good knowledge of the technical aspects of Hedgelaying

	GOLD STANDARD	points	Min	
1	Pleach	20	15	
2	Heel	20	15	
3	Stake /crooks/ Binders	20	15	
4	Appearance (True to style)	30	23	
5	Start and Finish	20	15	
6	Questions and answers	10	7	
7	Health and safety	20	15	
8	Root lay, back lay, side lay	20	15	
	Total points possible	160	120	75% = 120

## How Assessments are Arranged and Conducted

Assessments are normally arranged by contacting the NHLS. The Application Form gives details of the arrangements for all Assessments. Fees for Assessments are set nationally and paid to NHLS.

Assessments cannot take place until the Application Form and fees have been received by the NHLS. Mark sheets will be issued to the appointed Assessor(s) once applications have been processed.

Where a candidate fails to achieve the marks required to pass an Assessment, Assessors will clearly indicate areas for improvement to the candidate. A period of three months is advised before a candidate applies for a re-Assessment at the higher level.

One Assessor is required for the Bronze Assessments. When arranging Assessments at Silver or Gold, two Assessors are required; at least one Assessor must not have trained the candidates. Additional Assessors may be brought in as necessary, depending on candidate numbers.

At all levels, hedgelaying must be the unaided work of the candidate. It is recommended lots be drawn for Assessment sections and Assessors will ensure that the necessary stakes etc. are available.

Candidates should ensure their attire and conduct throughout the Assessment are in the best interests of their safety and the safety of others on the site. Appropriate PPE **must be worn**. Everyone involved with Assessments should behave in safe manner throughout.

To pass, a candidate must achieve at least the minimum mark in each section of the particular Assessment. In addition, the candidate must achieve the overall minimum total mark for the specific level of Assessment. Where a candidate fails to achieve the marks required to pass a Assessment, Assessors must clearly explain to the candidate why the standard has not been achieved and what could be done to correct this in the future.

## Appeals

Any appeal made against an Assessment result must be submitted in writing to the NHLS within two weeks of the Assessment date. Full details must be given of the reason for the appeal. The NHLS will consider the appeal and report to the candidate within one month of receipt of the appeal. The full appeals policy is available from the NHLS Secretary.

## Who are the Assessors?

The NHLS appoints Assessors from experienced Professional Hedge layers who are approved by Lantra Awards. All those appointed are required to complete the NHLS Assessor Standardization course. NHLS produces an annually revised list of Assessors which is available on request. Assessors should not examine their own trainees or employees.

## After the Assessment is Completed

Upon receiving the Assessors signed and completed mark sheets with relevant reports, results are submitted to NHLS for verification. Certificates will be issued by Lantra to successful candidates, usually within four weeks of the Assessment. Once Assessment Certificates are issued, the candidate will receive NHLS Accreditation at the appropriate level and can be listed on the NHLS list of Contractors at that level.

## Complaints

Where the Society receives substantiated complaints about the standard of work being below the accreditation level of an individual, the Association reserves the right to ask the individual to attend for re-examination of standards of workmanship. The NHLS may remove their accreditation if standards are not met. The individual shall meet all the costs involved.

If a certificate is lost or damaged, replacements can be obtained from NHLS, at a cost of £30 per certificate.

For more information on training, assessment and accreditation, contact the NHLS Secretary:

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